

THE QUIVER

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PJS

P.G.

"Remember!"—p. 453.

TRIED.

BY F. M. F. SKENE, AUTHOR OF "A STORY OF VIONVILLE."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE sight of suffering seemed to recall May to herself. She began at once tenderly and gently, as was her wont, to inquire into the condition of the poor distressed family, and found that all the com-

forts they had as yet enjoyed had been supplied by Mr. Evans; but there was still much to be done, and May's ready thoughtfulness had soon made arrangements for sending them everything they could re-

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quire, nor did she quit them till she had brought a smile even to the pale lips of the sick child, by the promise of some toys, with which he could amuse himself. Then she took her leave, feeling cheered by the comfort she had given; and on her way towards the farm she met Sydney, who was coming to escort her back. He had finished his sketch, and had brought it to show her, so that her attention was pleasantly occupied with it, till they found themselves at the house where Mrs. Leigh was waiting, quite ready for their return home.

The drive back in the soft dim twilight was very charming, and May's spirits revived under the soothing influences which surrounded her. Mrs. Leigh, resting quietly among her cushions, only spoke occasionally to say some gentle endearing word to the niece she loved so well, and Sydney, making his horse keep close to May's side of the phaeton, talked to her in his winning melodious voice of all the plans he knew she had formed for the good of her tenantry, as if with the fullest appreciation of her hopes and wishes.

The painful impression made upon her by the strange preacher's words passed quite away, and by the time they drove up in the quiet starlight to the door of the dear old home, May was as bright and joyful as when they started in the morning.

Sydney dismounted somewhat hastily, throwing the bridle of his horse to one of the grooms who was waiting, and came round to help Mrs. Leigh up the steps to the hall door. There her maid was ready to receive her, and he at once turned back to meet May. She was standing where she had just sprung from the phaeton, watching with a smile of amusement the playful wilfulness of her pretty ponies, who in their delight at finding themselves on their way to the stable, were indulging in various gambols which tried in no small degree the temper of the old coachman who was driving them round.

"They look as if they had not gone a mile to-day," she said to Sydney; "and I do not feel much more tired than they do. We have had such a pleasant day, and now the evening is so lovely, one quite grieves to go in." She turned to the door as she spoke, but Sydney caught her hand.

"Nor are you going in, dear May," he said; "you are coming with me into the grounds a little way, for I must speak to you."

And at the words May's heart stood still with a sudden terrible emotion, for she knew that the hour was come when her whole future fate must be decided for weal or for woe.

Breathless but unresisting, she let Sydney draw her away from the house, and down a side walk bordered by great old trees, which in summer cast a deep shadow over it, but now their branches, just bursting into leaf, let the starlit sky be seen at intervals, from which faint glimmerings of subdued light fell softly all around.

It was a strangely still and peaceful scene; there was not a whisper in the air, not a breath to stir the violets that grew in their mossy beds round the roots of the trees, and Sydney's voice sounded low and soft, when at last he broke the silence that brooded over them.

"Do you know what day this is, my dearest May?" he said. "I am sure you do; you know that the month of probation that you imposed upon me is over, and I have a right at last to ask you to renew the bond which made you mine six years ago. I do ask it, my May. I have never varied in my wishes; I do ask you to put an end to all uncertainty, and let me take you to my heart for ever."

Taken to his heart for ever! As those words, with all their promise of sweetest unchanging happiness, of tenderest protection and most loving care, passed from the lips of the man whom May Bathurst had loved with all the powers of her being for so long a time, an almost intolerable longing to yield herself up to the unutterable joy thus promised, rushed over her with such intensity of feeling that her eyes grew dim and her limbs seemed to lose their power.

Sydney saw that she was tottering, and passed his arm round her, and she was fain to lean her head for a moment on his breast, while she strove to regain her breath and still the beating of her heart sufficiently to speak her answer. What was that answer to be?

As she stood there in the dim silent night, with that protecting arm round her, a terror of life came upon her—life with all the power of suffering its compass can contain—and it seemed to her as if, with her head pillowed on that dear breast, she was gathered into the sweetest, safest refuge earth could give, where no harm or loss could ever touch her more, and that to tear herself away now from those sheltering arms was an utter—a maddening impossibility. Sydney, her love, her very life, was holding her to his heart, was bidding her make her rest there for ever. What power should ever rend her from him? Yet even through the rush of ungovernable emotion which possessed her whole being, she seemed to hear, like the deep tolling of a funeral bell, the solemn awful voice of the preacher saying to her, "Are you true? are you steadfast? are you purely, solely the servant of the Crucified?" And this man to whose breast she clung was the enemy of Christ! Perhaps his influence might destroy her own faith too! A terrible struggle; her brain seemed to reel; there was a sound as of many waters in her ears. She gave a gasping sob. Sydney appeared to have an intuition of her doubts, for he spoke again with a mournful sound of reproach in his voice—

"My May, surely you do not mean to fail me? Will you cast me out of your love now, after all these years in which I have felt secure of it? Will you send me back lonely, wretched, deceived, to the

exile which the hope of your affection alone brightened in the past? May, if you can betray me thus, we part this night, and for ever! I will not stay another hour in the house which is your home, if you repel me from your heart."

At this threat, involuntarily she clung closer to him, feeling that it were easier to die then and there, than to part from him of her own free will. He felt her movement, and tightening the clasp of his arms round her, he drew her yet nearer to his heart, bent his head down over hers, and said, "My darling, I was wrong, I was mad to doubt you. You will be my wife, as you promised long ago, I know. Only say it; May, my dearest, say that you will be my own true love for ever."

And she answered, "I will be your own true love for ever;" but her voice had a dying fall, as if she knew she was giving far more than her life away.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT a strange revelation would be made to us, if we could but once open our eyes on the vast web of human life in which we are entangled, so as to understand all its intricate mechanism, and see the invisible threads connecting us with other lives, as yet, perhaps, wholly unknown and unregarded by us! For it is one of the strangest conditions of our strange existence, that we often have to live on for years totally unconscious that the world contains some individual destined to have a most powerful—possibly most sinister—influence over our fate, and who equally unconscious, draws ever nearer and nearer to the hour when he or she will suddenly be flung across our path, to be inextricably bound up with our life for evermore, poisoning every source of joy within it, perhaps, or weighting it with pain and difficulty from which it never can be freed again.

How utterly astonished May Bathurst would have been in her luxurious home, at this the crowning hour of her bright existence, if she could have known that she would one day be linked in the chains of a fatal and life-long entanglement with one of the inmates of a miserable attic belonging to a house in a very poor part of London!

It was the same day as that on which, with the soft starlight falling upon her amid the odorous airs of the fair spring evening, May Bathurst yielded up her whole being to the sweetness of a mortal love, with the very sound of the solemn warning ringing in her ears. But the scene presented by the poverty-stricken room of which we have spoken seemed as if it could hardly have belonged to the same world, for though spring was already smiling in the park at Combe Bathurst, winter was still reigning here in its grimmest aspect. There was no fire in the cheerless grate; and the room, situated under the leads, was bitterly cold. One small window alone gave light to it, which looked out on the roof of the neighbouring house. There

was no candle on the broken table, and the failing twilight dimly revealed the occupants of this truly melancholy abode; yet they were well worth looking at, all three, in their different ways.

On a low curtainless bed, covered by a scanty blanket, lay a man of about forty-five years of age. He was worn and emaciated to the last degree, but it was evidently a powerful frame which want and sickness had thus reduced nearly to a skeleton, and the well-formed hands which lay outside the coverlet showed every bone through the almost transparent skin. His head and face were very fine; a noble forehead strongly indicating intellectual power rose over the large clear blue eyes, which had a strangely guileless, trusting expression, and his fair silky hair spread in thin locks over his pillow. The lower part of his face, with the small mouth, and delicately-cut chin, seemed to speak of a certain weakness of character, but no one could have doubted, in spite of his sordid surroundings, that the man was a gentleman in the fullest sense of the word, who had had the culture and education of one born to a refined position in life. He seemed tormented by restlessness, which the languor of illness alone prevented him relieving by violent movement. He gave vent continually to quick impatient sighs, and his eyes wandered again and again to the two watchers beside him, full of a mute pathetic questioning, which seemed to appeal to them to know why he suffered so much.

One of the faces to which his looks thus turned would have riveted the gaze of any one who had chanced to see it, not only from its exquisite beauty, but because the strange loveliness which characterised it was of a most unusual type. It possessed, in fact, a combination of the faultless classic features of a high-born Greek maiden, with the pure, delicate complexion of an English girl. The large almond-shaped eyes of deepest darkest blue, the straight pencilled eyebrows, the short upper lip, and perfect form of the beautiful mouth, were wholly Greek; but the marble whiteness of the forehead, and the faint rose tinge on the cheek, told of a Northern climate.

She was a young girl, seemingly about seventeen years of age, and the rare charm of her face was not only in its form or colour, for she had also a look of wonderful sweetness, and a childlike innocence of expression which was very winning.

Amongst other characteristics of Eastern beauty which she possessed was the great length and thickness of her hair, which draped her like a shining veil, flowing all round her where she sat; and also the undulating grace of her movements; while there was all the freshness and simplicity of a quiet English girl in her look and manner.

Her dress alone would have marked her as connected with the East; and it was the sole indication in that miserable room that the family had ever been in better circumstances, for it was the costume brought

by her beautiful Greek mother from her own country, which her father had never allowed her to dispose of with their other treasures, even in their worst difficulties. It consisted of a scarlet jacket worn over a white under garment, fastened round her slender throat, and had long hanging sleeves, in which she had wrapped her hands to shield them from the cold, and a dark petticoat, confined at the waist by a scarf of many colours, and sufficiently short to show her little feet, thrust into a pair of red Turkish slippers. Thus attired, the girl was a perfect vision of beauty. She was gazing at her father with a most sorrowful anxious look in her limpid blue eyes, and every now and then would stoop to kiss his hand, or smooth away with gentle touch the stray locks of hair which his restless movements brought over his face, while the trembling of her sweet lips told that she was greatly troubled.

The third occupant of the room was unmistakably Greek, without any admixture of an English element whatever. She was an old woman of upwards of sixty, seated on the floor in Oriental fashion, and wearing the dress of an Athenian peasant; a faded handkerchief, that once had been gay with vivid colours, placed on her head and drawn under her chin, was fastened at the side, with the fringed ends hanging down with a touch of elegance in spite of her poverty-stricken appearance, and from within the folds her withered face, bronzed with the fierce sun of many an Eastern summer, looked out, brilliantly lit up by a pair of keen black eyes, that were turned on the young girl with a look of almost worshipping love. She also wore a gracefully-cut jacket and petticoat, but of coarse material and sombre tint, and withal worn and patched to an extent which showed that they had done duty as her sole clothing for a very long time past.

There had been silence in the room for some minutes, and then the sick man spoke in a hoarse, complaining voice. "I am parched with thirst and sinking with faintness. Irene, can you not give me a glass of wine? Am I to lie here and die without help?"

Tears rushed impulsively into the girl's beautiful eyes at this appeal, and she clasped her small hands with passionate regret as she answered, in a singularly sweet, musical voice, "Darling papa, there is not a drop of wine left—not one. Oh, I wish I had some to give you!"

"But can you not go and buy some? it is not too late. You cannot mean that I am to spend the night in this dreadful suffering."

She hid her face in her hands, as if she could not answer. Then turning to the old Greek woman, she said to her, in her own language, "Xanthi, Xanthi, what shall I do? He tells me to go buy wine, and I have not a single penny; you know we had none even to buy bread to-day."

"Amaun, amaun!" (mercy, mercy), was all the

answer the old woman could give, rocking herself to and fro in her grief as she spoke.

Irene had spoken low, but her father heard her.

"What is that you are saying, child, no money? It is impossible!"

"Indeed, dear papa, it is too true; you know the landlord said yesterday, he would not let us stay even here unless we paid him, and I gave him the very last shilling we had; all the rest had been used to get wine for you, and the soup you had two days ago, and that was finished this morning."

She did not add that the bread on which she and her old nurse lived was finished too, but her father raised his gaunt frame with difficulty from the pillow, and looked at her.

"And do you mean to tell me, Irene, that you cannot get money from Reames the publisher, if you choose to go and ask for it? He must be owing me hundreds of pounds by this time—hundreds!"

"Dear papa," she said, very timidly, "I did go to him three days ago, and he said there was nothing due to you."

"Nothing due to me! and my volume of poems has been published six months! Does he expect me to believe that? The poems into which I poured my soul—my very life—on which I worked night after night, while the dull world was sleeping—which are the embodiment of all the inspiration, all the genius I know that I possess! Irene, you have not understood him; or it is some wretched conventionalism which makes him defer payment till a stated time. He would overlook that if he knew my necessity. He is an honest man; I know he would not defraud me. You must go to him again, Irene—now, at once. We must forget our pride, and let him know the truth of our miserable poverty. He will understand, as well as we do, that it is only for a time. That book must make my fortune. Ask him for an immediate advance."

Irene turned her head sorrowfully away. She had not had the heart to tell her father what was the truth, that the publisher had assured her, when she last saw him, that there were not only no profits on Mr. Clive's work, but that he expected himself to sustain a heavy loss.

"Why do you not go, child?" said her father, impatiently.

"I fear it would be of no use," she answered, faltering.

"No use! you do not know what you are saying. I know the value of my own work well enough; have I not been sustained through the grinding poverty of this last year, by the certainty that it would bring me untold gold? Ay! and better than gold—the praise, the enthusiasm of the multitude!" and his hollow eyes seemed to burn with fire as he spoke. He stretched out his bony hand, and grasped Irene's arm: "Child, do not forget to ask Reames also for any reviews of my book which may have appeared."

I would rather you brought me those than the money even—at least, if it were not for this dreadful parching thirst," he added, sinking back exhausted; "do go at once, Irene, if you would not see me die."

She slowly rose, and stood looking at him in utter perplexity what to do, well knowing, if she went, it would only be to bring him back a bitter disappointment, yet not daring to disobey him.

He was breathing heavily from fatigue at the effort he had made, and his dry lips had grown white from exhaustion; he turned his head towards her, as she still remained motionless beside him, and said, bitterly, "So you will not move a step to save your father's life! Be prepared then; for I shall not survive the morning in this state."

"Oh, I will go! I will go!" she exclaimed, with a cry of distress, and going up to her nurse, she whispered a few directions to her in Greek.

The old woman rose, gesticulating with her brown

withered hands in dismay, at finding her young mistress had to go out. Very tenderly, however, she gathered up the long floating masses of Irene's bright hair, and twisted it up, winding it round and round her exquisitely-shaped head, so as to enable the girl to place her little plain straw hat over it; then she took a threadbare black cloak from the bed, where it had been placed to give a little additional warmth to the sick man, and wrapped it around Irene's slender form, hiding completely the Eastern dress, which might have attracted attention in the crowded London streets.

The girl thanked her with a sweet winning smile, then went to her father and kissed his forehead, saying, "I will do my best, dear papa."

He nodded his head, but as she was turning away he grasped hold of her cloak to detain her for a moment, and said eagerly, in his feeble, hoarse voice, "Remember the reviews, Irene—remember!"

(To be continued.)

THE SIEGE OF AN OLD CAPITAL.

BY THE REV. RALPH DALY COCKING, M.A., INCUMBENT OF TRINITY CHAPEL, BRIGHTON.



ELEVEN years before the attempted destruction of Jerusalem by Sennacherib, his predecessor on the throne of Assyria, Shalmaneser, had besieged Samaria, cast the King of Israel, Hoshea, the son of Elah, into prison, and had scattered into captivity—some into Halah, some into Habor, by the river Gozan, some into the cities of the Medes—the ten tribes of Israel, who, under Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, had revolted from the government of Rehoboam, and, forsaking the worship of God, had worshipped, first, the golden calves, and afterwards, under Ahab and Jezebel, had descended to the degrading license of the worship of Baal and Ashtaroth.* From this captivity, brought on themselves by their wilful rejection of God, they never returned.

At the time of the attempted subjugation of Jerusalem by Sennacherib, Hezekiah was the King of Judah. He did much for Judah. He restored the worship of God, which during his father's reign had fallen into sad deterioration and corruption. He removed, by its destruction, the brazen serpent, which God had formerly granted to Israel for its healing and peace, but which had been rendered by them an occasion of idolatry and falling. With Jehoshaphat and Josiah he must be numbered among the best of kings and truest of men. In his public capacity he was a great administrator and a religious reformer. He did much to repair the evils of many of his predecessors. In private life

he was an example to those around him, a man of deep personal holiness; but, like all good men, he had his share of those imperfections which, in a measure, affect the highest human character.

One of his first political acts was to annul the alliance which his father, Ahaz, had made with the King of Assyria—an alliance through which Assyria had all the advantage and Judah all the burden. But as Ahaz had sought the alliance in order that his hands might be strengthened against Israel, he had to accept it with its disadvantages. "Ahaz took the gold and silver which was in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the King of Assyria"—a costly price to pay for such a friendship! Hezekiah piously refurnished the house of God with gold and silver, equal in value to that which had been so profanely removed. But he had not been long upon the throne before there occurred to him, what occurs, in a measure, to every man, but peculiarly to every religious man—an occasion for the measurement and trial of his faith—a moral probation necessary for the testing—yea, for the life of faith. The King of Assyria approached Jerusalem to punish her king for his rebellion against him. Hezekiah was sorely pressed and disheartened by the superior forces of Sennacherib which encamped around the sacred city, and instead of looking upwards to Heaven for strength—instead of resting exclusively and trustingly on that Arm, which had so often proved omnipotent and all-willing to save—instead of leaning immovably on the arm

* Phœnician deities representative of the sun and moon.

of the Lord of hosts who "saveth not by many or by few," his fears were excited, and his hopes of victory or resistance quenched, and in an hour of weakness and despair he buys off the conqueror, strips once more the Temple of its gold, and lays his kingdom under a heavy tribute, in the vain hope that Assyrian invaders would never more approach the city of the Lord—an act as politically weak as it was morally wrong. But it was an act which, though weak and wrong, finds its too perfect counterpart in the lives and experience of most—indeed, of all men. Every compromise with passion, every concession of right and principle for what is at the best but expedient, contains in its measure the spirit of this deed. The strong man armed—the envier, and therefore the enemy of man's peace and spiritual possessions—approaches with his mighty forces to storm that within us which Scripture terms the temple of the Holy Ghost, the citadel of faith, of principle, of hope, of immortality—the soul itself. A glorious temple it is! Noble in its architecture, for God himself has planned and formed it; rich in its gold, for it came from the mines of deepest and divinest love; sublime in its elevations, for its aspirations are to heaven; magnificent in its most costly, dear-bought materials, for the great sacrifice of the Son of God was the price whereby alone they could be procured.

Within this temple there is an altar rich in its spiritual sacrifice, and there burns the bright lamp of quenchless and immortal hope—bright, for is it not kindled from Him who is the Light of Light, and is not its sacrifice the offering of the heart's best, truest, holiest affection to God? To this temple the enemy of man layeth siege. The weapons of his warfare and the multitudes of his hosts are temptations, pleasures, wealth, ambition, lust! And how often it happens, in the hours of our moral trial and probation, that instead of viewing them as such, instead of looking upward for strength, and fighting the fight in the strength which God has promised to give to the faithful earnest asker; instead of remembering whose the temple is, on whom its foundations rest, and who it is that has chosen to place His name there; instead of remembering that the Lord is in his temple, we, like Hezekiah, are too often tempted to think more of him that is *against* than of Him that is *for* us; we retire from the battle, buy off the conqueror, strip the gold from the temple, rob the altar to pay the invader's price. Overcome by passion, men surrender the fine gold of moral purity—that which is the glory of angels, and which in its possession must ever be the richest blessing, for it is the pure in heart that shall see God.

Allured by ambition, men too often sell honesty and faith and principle; ensnared by pleasures,

they give up the golden virtues of unselfishness and sincerity—a price, which, while it impoverishes the temple, in no way satisfies the invader. Satisfies! so far from the demands of Satan being satisfied by the *gold* of the spiritual temple, it all the more makes him yearn to possess the temple itself.

This is what Hezekiah found to be the result of his unhappy compromise. The gold of Jerusalem was gone, but soon again Sennacherib's hosts surround the sacred city. It is the old, old story, that there can be no compact with wrong. Many a man who has been induced in an evil hour to yield to evil and to surrender right, has done so under the belief, and with the resolve, that he would never so yield again; or that no such temptation is likely again to befall him, and that if it did, he would not fail to conquer it. False reasoning! Reverse it and it is true. *Because* you have yielded much *once*, you will most assuredly be asked to yield *more* again. *Because* you have yielded your soul to evil *once*, you will find it fatally easier to yield it the second time!

A graphic description is given of the approach of the King of Assyria for the second time against Jerusalem. In the ears of the ambassadors sent to represent the King of Judah, the enemy, with boastful pride, recounts his past achievements over the nations—over Samaria, over the kings of Hamath, Arpad, Sepharvaim, Hena, and Irah, and concludes with what to him must have sounded the most unanswerable reasoning. "Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?" But his reasoning was as weak as his conclusion was false. For those whom he calls *gods*, and whom he defeated, were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone.

Under good and inspired advice Hezekiah did not repeat the mistake of former days, or of the former temptation, but this time acts well, wisely, and religiously. His adviser was no other than Isaiah, the son of Amos, the Gospel prophet. Under his advice Hezekiah instructs his ambassadors, "Answer him not." No compromise this time, no concessions, no stripping the Temple of its gold! He is told by Isaiah that God has revealed the intended destruction of the Assyrians, which was, indeed, already accomplished in the Divine purposes, that a rumour of war in his own land should draw Sennacherib back thither, and that he should "fall by the sword in his own land."

Rabshakeh, on hearing that Assyria and Libnah were actually at war, sent without loss of time an ultimatum to Hezekiah, expressed in almost the same words as the first defiant message, demand-

ing the surrender of Jerusalem. It is well known how that message was received. It is told in words so sublime in their brevity that to add one word to the description would but spoil what is already perfect. "Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord. And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord." And while he prayed with such fervency of soul for a victory over the enemies of God and of Judah, he was aware—for he had learnt it from the inspired lips of Isaiah—that Sennacherib would be defeated; yet with all that knowledge he prayed for victory, as though he were ignorant of its certainty, and as though his prayer were the one thing needed to secure it. And this opens out to the mind the view of a subject which grows larger and deeper the more it is studied and gazed upon—namely, the foreknowledge of God co-existing yet never clashing with the responsibility and free will of the creature—that though God be omniscient, and knows the end from the beginning, man's responsibility to obey his word, to approach him in prayer, is no less an obligation than if it were the case that through man's prayer on earth the Almighty for the first time derived his knowledge of the event. And though we cannot see or understand all the bearings of so mysterious a theme, we may realise that its working can operate to the moral and spiritual advantage of man, since, if in the influence of its action, it effects nothing more, it brings man within the circle of the designs of that foreknowledge, drawing and keeping him within the current of God's will, leading him to realise the blessedness and power of God's wise and loving intentions.

Hezekiah spread the letter before the Lord, and prayed. In the example to pray, and in the richness of blessing which followed in its wake, much comfort and encouragement may be derived and enjoyed. In the multitudinous cares, afflictions, doubts, which in a measure find a place in the lives of all men; when troubled as regards the present, sorrowful for the past, or anxious for the future of ourselves or of those we love; when borne down by some heavy trial, tried by some searching temptation, doubtful as to a line of action or of duty, let all be spread before God, believing that the Ear which heard Hezekiah can still hear us; that the Eye which read that outspread letter in the Temple can see and read every line and mark and expression of sorrow, care, perplexity, doubt, traced upon the heart, and that the same all-loving Hand which brought him peace can minister the truest peace and relief to us; can uphold us in our weakness, and give us the oil of joy for mourning; that the same Hand which drove the Assyrian back and shivered the sword

in his nerveless grasp, can and will defend and shield the hearts and homes and everlasting destinies of those who seek and long to have their God's defence. "Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find," is the motto which surmounts the temple of prayer. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

What more can be needed than this? Why, with such heaven-pledged promises, need we, should we, disturb the mind, darken the understanding, or defraud our hopes by speculating on questions of metaphysical difficulty concerning God's foreknowledge and man's responsibility, which at the best we can but partly know or reconcile on earth? When Hezekiah prayed his God-trusting prayer, there was no time to indulge such thoughts, even if he had them, for the Assyrian was already at the gate, his trumpet-blast would soon be heard within the Temple walls. With us, too, time is short; the enemy is at hand; moments are golden; the grave is opening; eternity is widening to the view. Not one hour should be lost in spreading before God our wants, weaknesses, hopes, doubts, success, failure, and the answer to prayer will be the best, the truest proof now, as it was in Hezekiah's day, that there is a God in heaven who hath an ear to hear, a hand to uphold, and a will to save to the uttermost those that come to him in loving, trusting confidence.

And truly may it be believed that when the last great day of reckoning comes, when the books of the world's long record are opened wide, it will be clearly seen that what the world itself so often assigned to secondary causes was the direct result of the earnest prayers of God's Church and faithful people; that war was averted, not by the adroitness of diplomacy, but in answer to untiring prayer; that pestilence was kept afar off, rich harvest of golden plenty ripened in the fields, peace reigned throughout the land, and health within the home, from the ceaseless prayers ever ascending to God in heaven from the Church on earth—prayers powerful through the alone intercession of Jesus Christ.

And encouragingly as does this striking instance of answered prayer come home to each man, there is yet another feature prominent in this picture, rich in its instruction, and most wholesome in its moral. Hezekiah prayed, but he not only prayed, he also *worked*. If he poured forth his heart in prayer to God, he also employed the head and hand which God had given him in utilising and improving the means of defence and security placed within his reach. What they were may be

read in 2 Chron. xxxii. 2—8. And never was there a truer maxim, or one, when rightly understood, which is so beneficial in its principles and spirit, as, "Heaven helps those who help themselves." Religion is no state of dreamy indolence; breathing out a prayer, and idly slumbering until the answer come, like the Moslem mariners, who in the storm left their ship to toss and their sails to the mercy of the winds, while they themselves knelt down to pray to their Moslem god. To prayers offered up in such a temper of mind men need look for no answer whatever. In the spiritual, no less than in the temporal life, there is no premium upon indolence. It is upon the proper and appointed use of the talents which God has given; upon the due employment of the means he has placed within the reach that the blessings invoked in prayer come down and render them consecrated and powerful agents. The truest saints in God's Church have ever been the truest stewards of God's gifts. God's truest worshippers in the Church have ever been his truest workmen in the world; and that religion does not consist

exclusively in prayer, or exclusively in action, but is made up and completed by the simultaneous co-existence of both in beautiful harmony, never found a truer or more perfect illustration than in the life of Him of whom, if we sometimes read that he spent whole nights in prayer to God, we also read that he went about doing good, and that the key-note of his incarnate life was struck in those wondrous words: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

And as we might expect that the part acted on earth by the Lord of heaven would be daily enacted in heaven itself, so we find; for so saw the Prophet Isaiah. When permitted in the Spirit to see into the solemnities and inner life of the Church in glory, gazing on the all-dazzling glories of the seraphim, he saw that each had wings of light, six in number. With twain he covered his face in adoring awe; with twain he covered his feet in humble, bashful reverence; but with twain he did fly—sped forth on high Heaven's behests—flew to execute his high Lord's commands, and to traverse the high sphere of a seraph's occupation.

A - MYSTERY OF LIFE'S BATTLE.

BY MRS. G. LINNÆUS BANKS.

I AM looking, yes, am looking with sad eyes
that see not yet,

What there can be worth the brooking in
this world of cark and fret;

I am peering, dull of hearing, through the mist and
through the sound,

For the reason of the cheering that ariseth all
around.

I hear neighing, I hear braying from the trumpet's
clam'rous throat;

See the warriors' dread arraying, hear the cannons'
thund'rous note;

See the flashing, hear the clashing of the swords
that meet and smite;

Hear the crimson torrent splashing through the
darkness and the light.

I hear moaning, I hear groaning, I hear hoof-beats
on the plain,

Chargers trampling (no one owning) on the living
and the slain;

I hear wailing unavailing o'er the dying and the
dead,

See the widow's cold lips paling as she lifts a gory
head.

I see traces on all faces of a battle lost and
won;

Ask, "Whom victory disgraces? what the gain when
all is done?"

I hear "Glory, glory, glory!" for an answer mid the
din,—

That old and worn-out story—as if murder were
not sin!

And I ponder as I wander o'er the Battle-field of
Life,

On all the good we squander in its everlasting
strife;

All the sadness and the madness of the universal
creed

That, for one man's gain or gladness it is needful
many bleed.

If unspoken, still the token of this faith lies all
around—

Though silence be not broken, there is language
without sound—

And the rattle of the battle in the pulpit, on the
mart,

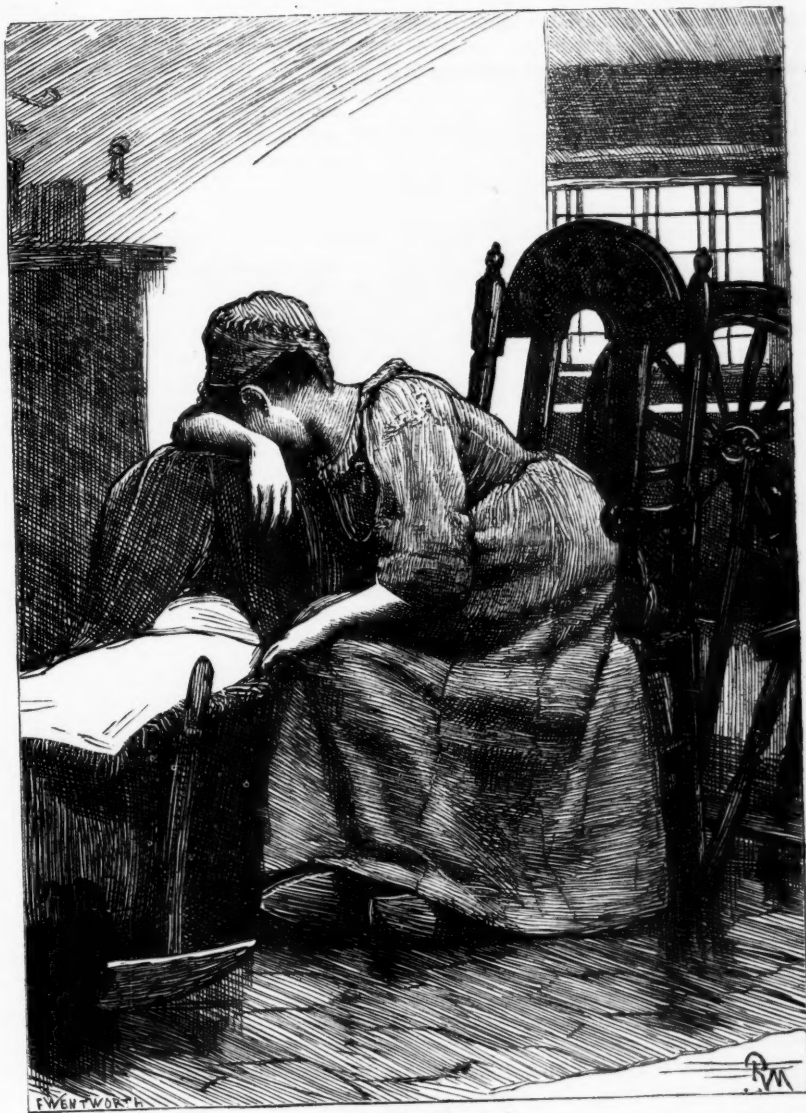
In boudoirs where women prattle, is enough to
rend the heart.

Statesmen palter, pastors falter, as they bend to
power and might,

Or lay down on self's high altar every sense of shame
and right;

And the clerly penning darkly what seem facts
for public eyes,

Do not scruple to give starkly a roll of shifts and
lies.



(Drawn by R. MACBETH.)

"Vigils keeping, worn with weeping"—p. 453.

Now I shiver by the river whose dark bridges long
and wide
Tell of gasping sob and quiver, and the splash
beneath the tide
Of the mortal at that portal which opens inwards
only,
Where Mercy waits—immortal—for the suffering and
lonely.
Vigils keeping, worn with weeping, with gaunt famine,
toil, or care,
Whilst soft Luxury lies sleeping, I see women young
and fair;
Dusty treadle, rusty needle, idle spindle, silent
loom,
Call to sexton and to beadle, "Find this stricken
'surplus' room."
But while looking, sadly looking, with my eyes all
dim and wet,
If aught be worth the brooking in this world of
cark and fret,
A bright angel, whose evangel is to open ears and
eyes,
Tore the veil from many a strange ill I beheld
beneath the skies.
I saw evils which grim devils had sown broadcast on
the earth,
As food for fiendish revels, bear some fruit of nobler
birth;

Pity faintly, pure and saintly, lulled the wounded
unto rest;
While *Benevolence* robed quaintly broke the chain
of the oppressed.
In dim alleys, at the galleys, both by want and crime
accurst,
With a foot that never dallies comes sweet *Charity*
the first:
She aye chases from foul places fell *Despair's*
envenomed brood,
And warms ice-cold hearts and faces with the flame
of *Gratitude*.
Falsehood's vassal, drunk with wassail, might uprear
his standard black,
But still *Truth* maintained her castle, having *Courage*
at her back;
Not a sorrow but could borrow a sun-ray from *Faith*
and *Hope*,
And *Fortitude's* to-morrow lay beyond our human
scope.
Then the rattle of Life's battle had significance
for me,
As I saw *Good born of Evil* was God's sacred
mystery.
Thus enlightened, my eye brightened, for I felt that
earth was fair,
And I turned to thank the angel—he had vanished
into air!

JOHN HESKETH'S CHARGE.

BY ALTON CLYDE, AUTHOR OF "UNDER FOOT," ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER LXX.

MATTHEW ROBINSON'S WILL.



THE Brothers Robinson were sitting by the fire in their well-furnished library. Both the eccentric old men were visibly aging. Josiah's attacks of rheumatism had become more violent and frequent, and even hale Matthew had shown signs of breaking up. Though they were rich enough, they did not retire from business, for Matthew always set his face against any hint of the kind.

"So you have done what you said, Josiah. Well, after this curious document," and Matthew suspended between his finger and thumb a paper which he had been reading, "I shall not be surprised at anything you may do."

"Why, there is nothing extraordinary in it, Matt; we have neither of us any relatives, and what else are we to do with all our money? we have more than we know what to do with."

As this assertion was incontrovertible, Matthew

contented himself with the misanthropic growl, "Well, if we have, it has been fairly earned."

"No one denies it, Matt, but I don't see why you should quarrel with me leaving a legacy to John Hesketh, one of the noblest fellows we ever met."

"No great wonder in that, when we don't happen to have met any," Matthew rejoined, in his dry cynical tone. "Besides, if I am not much mistaken, your John Hesketh is in a fair way to have enough money of his own."

"I hope he will, Matt, but life has many chances and changes, and it may prove a help in reserve."

"It's something new for you to talk about keeping money in reserve; but what is this absurd idea of leaving money to that young girl Eva Ashton? I can't understand that at all; and to be plain with you, Josiah, from the way you have talked about her, I think it a blessing that you chanced to be old enough to be her grandfather."

This view of the subject so amused the elder brother that he leaned back in his chair, and indulged in a fit of laughter.

"You old grumbler, what crotchet will you get next?"

At that moment there was a ring at the door-bell.

"A visitor, Matt. Who can it be?"

"I think I have an idea," remarked Matthew, quietly. "It is Maxwell; I am expecting him."

Maxwell was the name of their family lawyer. The elder brother looked surprised. Matthew explained, "He is coming by appointment, to bring me a document that I have instructed him to draw up for me, and which, by the way, I shall want you to witness."

There was no time for further explanation, for the servant appeared, ushering in Mr. Maxwell, a grey-haired, benevolent-looking man, whom the brothers welcomed with equal cordiality. Very little time was wasted in preliminaries—that would not have suited business-like Matthew. The deed was produced, and Matthew read it to himself, after which he gravely handed it to Josiah; and a curious little pucker might have been remarked about his mouth, as he watched his brother's face. He seemed prepared for the effect which it produced.

"Why, Matthew, what in the world have you been doing? If mine was, as you just now said, a curious document, what do you call this? I see now why you grumbled at my legacy to John Hesketh; you thought it was like 'poaching on your manor.' Ah, yes, very good, Matt, I see the point of the humour; you had your reasons for saying that the young man was in a fair way to have money enough of his own."

The paper under discussion was a draft of the will of Matthew Robinson, in which, at his death, he bequeathed the bulk of his fortune to John Hesketh. He enjoyed his brother's astonishment, as he said, "I was determined that you should not have all the will-making to yourself, Josiah, and I fixed on John Hesketh because he has no nonsense about him, and from the time that I first knew of him paying away his money on that debt of David Ashton's, I've put him down as a remarkable young fellow—in fact, a sort of variety in the species. He has upset one or two of my theories about human nature, but I don't mind that."

The benevolent-looking lawyer listened with a quiet chuckle of enjoyment. He was familiar with the character of his clients, whom he knew when they were young men beginning the world.

CHAPTER LXXI.

EDWARD ARDEN'S PUNISHMENT.

THE cancelling of their agreement by Eva Ashton was a wound to Edward Arden's pride. His mother opened her placid blue eyes in astonishment at the news, and made no secret of her regret, for Eva had always been her favourite. Caroline received the intelligence without comment.

A surprise had awaited Edward on his arrival at Lowfield, in the person of Lionel Elliott, and the discovery of the terms on which his intimacy had been renewed. When it was whispered to him that the marriage of his sister and Lionel was expected to take place in the ensuing autumn, he was warm in his expressions of pleasure at the event in prospect, and ended by saying to his mother, "I am glad things have come right between her and Elliott, for I think Carrie used him very badly."

It was during Lionel's visit at Lowfield that a report, on the authority of Mr. Walford, was conveyed to them to the effect that Sir Gilbert Mottram had been offered and had accepted a Government appointment abroad. The mention of the baronet introduced the subject of the bust which Lionel had been commissioned to copy from Caroline's photograph. This led to explanations between the lovers, in which he learned the facts of Sir Gilbert's proposal and rejection.

Mrs. Elliott showed much tender solicitude on the subject of her son's choice. From the moment of her introduction to Caroline, she had read the secret of the love which he had kept so carefully hidden, she recognised the face which she had often seen in his studio, for the sculptor had almost unconsciously reproduced in many of his creations of beauty the living face which his heart had enshrined. The simple-minded old lady was quite satisfied to accept things as they were, and willing to receive the daughter-in-law which her son proposed to her. In his happiness the dearest hope of her life was fulfilled.

* * * * *

John Hesketh and Edward Arden had parted without a quarrel, but the old friendship was not renewed. It seemed by mutual consent that they fell apart and went their separate ways, avoiding each other as if by tacit agreement. It was in this way that John Hesketh marked his sense of Edward's infidelity, and resentment for the suffering which he knew that it must have caused Eva. Edward had seized the first opportunity of leaving Lowfield, and returning to the gay continental life and the pursuit of the young lady whose attractions had too readily captivated his fickle fancy. But to his chagrin and disappointment he had returned to find that she was on the point of marriage with a gentleman who had been long attached to her—the eldest son of a noble English house. If Eva Ashton had desired revenge, she would have obtained it in his mortification at the discovery.

After his mother's death, which took place a few years after Caroline's marriage, Edward seemed to give the reins to his extravagant habits, almost deserting Lowfield, and living an idle, aimless life, a voluntary exile from the circle of friends who had known and respected him in other days. He heard now and then a rumour of John Hesketh's well-deserved prosperity, how he was building up fame and fortune.

Though not given to envy, there were times when Edward Arden bitterly compared their relative positions. He, a gentleman by birth, with all the advantages which had come to him by inheritance, was going down the social ladder, while the self-made man was rapidly climbing upward.

CHAPTER LXXII.

WON.

FORTUNATELY for Mr. Fenwick, the firm whose failure had alarmed him was not that with which he had business connections, but another bearing the same name. Hence had arisen his mistake. The firm in which he was so deeply interested being still solvent in the commercial world, he had lost no time in communicating the joyful news to his niece.

The fear of impending poverty being removed, a burden had been lifted from his spirit. It rejoiced him also to know that he would be able to make the restitution that he wished.

Beyond a few brief words of explanation which Eva considered necessary, she preserved a dignified silence respecting the breaking of her engagement with Edward Arden. It was not suffered to become a subject for comment in the family circle. Even Barbara respected the feelings of her cousin, and admired the spirit she had shown. John Hesketh still came and went in the old way. But between him and Eva there was the same delicate reserve on the subject of Edward Arden. There was never a word or an allusion from John that could be a touch on the secret wound. Nor did the high-minded, generous fellow make an effort to turn to his own account the broken engagement which had left her free. It was in these meetings that John's habitual shyness seemed transferred to Eva. She did not meet him in the old free sisterly fashion; and he, unskilled in the mysteries of the feminine nature, could not read the secret of the change, but grieved over it. He did not guess the truth that was slowly revealing itself to her—that her heart had never found its true master in Edward Arden, and that the first girlish love which he had won was not the one life-long passion that throbs through a woman's being, and stirs the deepest currents of her nature. Nor did Eva know, until conviction was brought home to her during a temporary illness of John Hesketh, when his life was said to be in danger. It was then that she realised what she would lose in him. But he recovered, and time passed without bringing those two nearer each other. John could never tell exactly how it was that he came to win his Rachel, for whom he had served so faithfully. The words were spoken and answered in a way that encouraged him to draw the blushing girl to his breast, where she nestled as if she had found there the true shelter that could not be taken from her.

"My darling, this joy seems to over-fill my cup. It is so hard to realise that you can love a plain, awkward fellow with so little in his favour."

"Oh, John! how blind I have been."

It was then that she whispered a confession of what she had overheard during his talk with Edward Arden in the library, and with her shy grey eyes timidly raised to his face, repeated the words in which he had told the secret of his love.

It was touching to see the joy of the white-haired old grandfather when he placed Eva's hand in John's broad palm, saying, brokenly, "I give her to you, John, as he who is gone would have given her, and I bless you both for him."

The marriage of Eva and John Hesketh took place in the church at Lowfield, Josiah Robinson giving away the bride. George Kendrick, who had just returned from a successful voyage, acted as groom's man, throwing his whole soul into the occasion. The festivities of the day included a liberal treat to the school-children and a dinner to the poor of the village. The landlady of "The Grapes" convened a tea-party on her own account, in honour of the wedded pair, on which occasion she became eloquent in praise of the beauty and goodness of Mrs. John Hesketh. It is certain that Lowfield church never saw a lovelier bride than Eva looked in her pure white dress and veil. As she passed down the aisle the familiar tones of the organ swelled out like the welcome of an old friend.

We have little more to add, except that Barbara Fenwick managed to meet some one more appreciative of her charms than Lionel Elliott had been. She married, and transferred to another household the talent for domestic management which she had so long exercised in that of her father. Mr. Fenwick gave up the London house for a pretty suburban villa, where he and his favourite daughter lived together.

Some years later Geoffrey Fenwick came back to England with the intention of spending the rest of his days in his native land. A full explanation took place between the cousins, during which Mr. Fenwick learned how Geoffrey had managed to save himself from drowning, also that the motive which had taken him abroad, and led him for so many years to encourage the supposition of his own death, had been to inflict a life-long punishment on the man towards whom he had cherished a morbid purpose of revenge. A reconciliation followed, and the solitary old man, who had formed no home ties for himself, was glad to accept a seat at the fireside of the Fenwicks, the chief attraction being the presence of Louisa Westbrook, for whom he showed a strong liking. Mr. Fenwick rightly guessed that the secret of this preference was Louisa's likeness to her mother, Geoffrey's first and last love.

Old David Ashton found a happy home with Eva and her husband. All his earthly hopes were realised.

he had done his allotted work, the sheaves were gathered and bound, nothing left for him now but to rest after the burden and heat of the day, and wait in peace the coming night.

George Kendrick, the brave-hearted sailor, had prospered in his vocation—he was again the owner of a vessel superior to the one whose loss he had mourned as if she had been a living thing.

He and John Hesketh had a friendly dispute about the repayment of his debt. As John would not take back the money, George made a compromise by setting it aside as a birthday gift for his little godson, John's first-born.

Eva had been some months a happy wife before the news of her marriage reached Edward Arden, who was then in America. It may have added a keener sting to the disappointments which were filling his life with self-reproaches and regrets. He felt the full force of his words when he said, "John deserves her better than I did, and I know they will be happy."

He was right. Eva had all that makes up the happiness of a loving woman's life. There was no missing link in the chain that bound her to her husband's heart, and she was content to be for life "John Hesketh's Charge."

THE END.

THREE ADVENT VOICES.



T was a bright day in the early autumn, and I was wandering through a field of corn which, almost ripe for harvest, waved its golden head in the breeze, as if glad to do obeisance to its lord the sun. As I passed along a pathway that ran across the field, my tread, gentle as it was, aroused a skylark, who had been busy at my feet feeding on some of the fallen grains. Grateful for his meal, and eager to "pour his full heart" in praise to the Giver, the bird sprang quickly on the wing, and in a few moments I could see him soaring higher and higher, till he was almost lost to sight in the azure sky. Singing as he went, rose the bird, until all the air was full of his melody, and it almost seemed as if he would bear his song up to the footstool of God's throne. But presently, as I gazed and listened to the happy songster, his wing began to tire, though not his voice, and slowly by short downward flights, hovering at times as if reluctant in mid air, the bird descended, singing the while, and joyfully proclaiming far and wide the beauties of creation and the wondrous works of God. "What a lesson," thought I, is there here of faith!" This was the voice of Autumn.

Months rolled away, and it chanced that I was one day walking through the same cornfield, now no longer thick with corn, though even now the furrows were not visible, being wrapped in a mantle of new-fallen snow. Christmas-tide was near at hand, and my thoughts naturally dwelt upon such happy memories as the season is wont to suggest to Christian hearts. When suddenly my ear caught the cheerful notes of a robin, singing from a neighbouring tree, where he had found for himself a little harbour of refuge amidst the snowy landscape, and where he could regale on berries to his heart's content. Right joyously he sang beneath the inclement sky, and I was almost at a loss to tell the secret of his joy. On that wintry day, clearly, and with a pleasant welcome,

sounded his notes of thankful praise. Then I thought, "This little bird is preaching me from yonder bush a sermon practical and real. He is a true philosopher, content with what he has around him, willing to look beneath the surface of things, and able to anticipate, even in winter, the coming spring. The snow lies thick upon the ground; but his brave heart is warm within, and his red waistcoat can defy the cold. Even so, in the darkest and most gloomy days should come the voice of Hope! Let me, too, expect, like the robin, the sunny hours of Spring." This was the voice of Winter.

Yet once again—but now in the opening spring-tide—I found myself in the pathway that led across the cornfield. The dark furrows began already to look green with the bursting corn; Nature had put on her vernal dress. Responsive to the season my mind was full of gladness. I was thinking of the golden hours of summer, of which this bright day was a pleasant foretaste, when suddenly, for the first time, I heard—apparently from a copse near at hand—the voice of an old friend, that "blithe new-comer" proclaiming his name, "Cuckoo—cuckoo," far and wide, as he flew from tree to tree with rapid flight to hide himself from view.

"Thrice welcome," said I, "darling of the spring,
Even yet thou art to me;
No bird, but an invisible thing—
A voice, a mystery!"

Look where I might, "in bush, or tree, or sky," I could see nothing of the bird; only his voice, quaint but clear, came ringing out those well-known notes that tell of "sunshine and of flowers." "Summer is near, it will soon be here!" 'twas thus he seemed to sing. Yes, cuckoo, thou art but a bird, but thou art rich in wholesome counsel, and thy voice is full of love. This was the voice of Spring.

As I continued my walk, thinking of the bird, presently it came into my mind how I had heard

the lark's song in this very field when the corn was ripening, and how, here too, the robin had sung to me so merrily from the hawthorn-tree. And now the cuckoo was uttering his glad note, at once the harbinger and witness of the summer.

Even so, thought I, it was in old time with the voices of the prophets. This field, as the seasons change, is like the world—at one time, to all appearance, ripening for the harvest, and now lying still and cheerless in more than wintry cold, and now again arraying itself once more in all the livery of spring. Isaiah, rapt in holy vision, soaring up to heaven's gate, and thrilling the ear with his rich music, first gave to men bright faith, and told the glory of Him who is both "Wonderful and Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." After him, three hundred years had passed away; the world lay dead and lifeless; men's hearts were growing cold, and hope itself seemed almost gone, when there arose another prophet—the last of all the company of seers, the messenger of spring. Malachi, sent to foretell the coming of "the promised King," amid the cheerless landscape left alone, when all other voices had long been silent in the tomb, linked the past with the future, and tuned his harp to sing of hope. "The day is coming," this was his song: "The Sun of Righteousness shall arise, with healing in his beams." And, behold, "His Messenger shall come before his face to prepare the way

before Him." Then followed the long winter, rolling in between the prophecy and its fulfilment. Four hundred years of anxious expectation, days of darkness and of cruelty; till at length, where least by man expected, suddenly there came to men the "voice"—only a voice—"of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord! And all flesh shall see the salvation of God!"

So surely, though it may seem tardily, God fulfils his word. Isaiah, and all the "goodly fellowship of the prophets," had foretold; Malachi re-echoed the cry, "Messiah cometh!" And now, in the barren desert of Judea, stands John the Baptist, a prophet greater than them all, yet able and eager to affirm that there stands One in the crowd, unknown and unregarded, "whom they knew not, whose shoes he was not worthy to bear." A prophet, did I say? ay, and more than a prophet; the messenger of love, the forerunner of the Saviour, and himself a witness of the Gospel day.

"Thus, then," thought I, "the song of the skylark at heaven's gate is all interpreted. God has sent his Son from heaven. The robin's cheerful note is more than justified; for 'the winter is past, and the time of the singing of birds is come.' And now this bird of spring himself cannot vie in simplicity or power with that other 'voice of one crying in the wilderness, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!'"

H. E. L.

STORIES OF THE "QUIVER COT."—II.

AFTER little Martha's departure, another little maiden, somewhat older, was given the privilege of occupying the "Quiver Cot." She had come from a distance (Devonshire) for surgical treatment—to have her hip straightened. At first she was very shy and silent, overcome by numbers and such unusual surroundings; but very soon Sarah's voice was one of the loudest and most cheerful. Like most of the children, she was fond of singing hymns, and the usual ward favourites were soon learnt, and often to be heard proceeding from apparently an empty cot, for nothing could be seen at any distance of Sarah. Flat upon her back, with long splints on each leg, no pillow under her head, certainly her position was not very lively or comfortable. However, the hope of soon getting cured is a great help to the older children, and a patient, happy, temper like little Sarah's looks usually beyond present discomforts.

Before very long Sarah was able to get up and be placed on one of the little couches, and then she instigated many delightful little dolls' tea-parties, which the children appreciated probably more than

either the dolls or the nurses, as they were conducive to various little untidinesses. The Sunday teaching, either by the ladies or her own nurse (who was very fond of her), Sarah always enjoyed heartily, and after a week or two of the couch she was able to join the convalescents in their day-room on Sunday mornings, where a little service of singing and a few short prayers usually occupies an hour or more. Little Sarah always joined most reverently in the prayer for sick children, and on one occasion remarked that "it was nice to have a prayer like that in the Prayer-book." Her favourite hymns were "Once in royal David's city" and "Pilgrims of the night," these two, with the one used daily in the wards, "Soft and quiet is the bed," Sarah used diligently to teach fresh-comers, line by line, of words and tune. I shall always connect them with her bright face and pleasant voice, though she will never sing them with me any more.

For some weeks she made good progress, and was happy and noisy enough; then we noticed that she looked rather pale, and it was thought that the ward air was telling a little upon the country child. One morning, just when she had been ordered to Highgate

on the following Thursday, she asked to stay in bed. As far as could be known then there seemed but little the matter; but little Sarah W. never got up again. Her bright colour and sparkling eyes were not signs of health. I left town the morning after she was ordered to stay in bed, and returned in a week, one day before she went to heaven. She died very quietly, the first death to hallow the "Quiver Cot." She was missed very much in her ward, dear little girl, but who could really regret her death?—"taken from the evil to come," after having borne, even at nine years of age, much pain, but added to which she was never likely to be very strong; and so my little friend—or rather her earthly presence—has become one of the sweet shadowy memories that throng both the boys' and girls' wards. Very few of the children, especially those whose stay exceeds the average six or seven weeks, go without leaving some touching or peculiar remembrance behind for those who have loved and tended them.

Some weeks before Sarah left us a little girl had been taken as in-patient, who was ill with typhoid fever—Isabel D., five years old. She was very ill for some time, and her mother and father were allowed to visit her as often as they could arrange to do so. When the "Quiver Cot" was vacant little Isabel was put into it in a quiet corner. For hours she lay between life and death, looking like a little shadow of a child, so pale and ghastly, and quite unconscious of all around her. Her nurse watched her every movement, carrying out every order given by the doctors with the quiet patience and cheerfulness which characterise a good nurse, and at last her efforts were rewarded: Isabel was pronounced "out of immediate danger."

Days passed on, and Isabel had no relapse; the little pale face plumped out, and the thin pipy voice gathered tone and sweetness, and the child was certainly convalescent. By degrees she was allowed some little extra in the way of nourishment, which fact would be proclaimed to the whole ward with a flourish by Isabel. For instance: "My doctor has put me on fish, aint it nice?" or, "I say, Polly, I'm on wine now, as well as brandy, and two eggs!"

At last the day came for Isabel to go to Highgate. The day before, she had been provided with a complete set of nice clothes, all and each of which were shown to the dear brother (confined in another ward), who expressed his approbation, and gave wise orders about the care to be taken of them, and how she was "to mind and not leave any of 'em at Highgate when she left, because mother would be so glad of 'em for her when she was at home again."

Much excitement prevails always at the hospital on the "Highgate mornings" (Thursdays), and on this special Thursday a good many children were going, both chronics and convalescents, and very peculiar and amusing were the "wonders" expressed as to what 'ighgate would be like. Some

of the children said it was "real country;" others, who had come from a distance and knew what "real country" was like, scouted the idea of reaching "real country" in "a omnibus." So they passed the long morning, dividing their energies between admiration of their beautiful new clothes and the various "wonderments." Those who were less fortunate, and could not possibly hope to go to Highgate themselves for some weeks or even months, shared the prevailing excitement, and enjoyed it also, while those who were too ill to enter into the subject, wished aloud that they would "all hold their tongues."

It has occurred to many who are kind enough to visit the hospital to ask, "Do not the children disturb each other very much?" and the answer is, "Not as a rule; some of the very bad cases are now and then disturbed, and if it were possible they would of course be put in quiet rooms, but that cannot be in the present building." So it is a great comfort to know that the little children do not trouble or worry each other much, and that in all cases where the children are old enough to know anything, great sympathy and patience are shown towards each other; and when a little cot is seen, first, perhaps, for some hours with a screen round it, and then empty, the little ones merely look a little serious, and say, with quiet voices, "Johnnie, (or Nellie) has gone to heaven."

At last two o'clock came, and in due time the omnibus from Highgate, bringing a host of rosy, rollicking boys and girls, hardly to be recognised even by their old nurses. As former patients, one or two were obliged to introduce themselves, slipping a fat hand into an old friend's, and saying, "Nurse, I'm Tommy, only I'm well now;" or, "Lady, you knows me; don't you know you gave me these boots? I'm Lucy, out of Nurse Annie's ward. I had a bad chest; I've got well at Highgate."

These new-comers were all hustled into a room "for fear of their going back by mistake," while the rest, delicate convalescents, were carried down with all their worldly goods and treasures in brown paper, each by his or her own nurse. All being ready, the chronics were brought down, some on mattresses, and packed by the ladies, carefully and tenderly, into the omnibus, much to the edification and amusement of the little street Arabs, who always seem to muster strongly on those occasions, and give much gratuitous advice.

The last good-byes are said, admiring and grateful mothers and fathers have given their farewell kisses; the poor parents seem quite awed by the superior air which cleanliness and tidy clothes, added to the refinement of sickness, give to their little ones, and depart with tears in their eyes very often. Then the returned healthy ones are all counted up, the pence they have saved up in the little Hospital Bank are given them,

also a picture-book or toy, and then they go with their waiting friends, bidding good-bye to the best home they have ever known, and let us hope carrying away with them some good, and certainly some very pleasant and happy remembrances of kind words and looks, and the certain knowledge—so readily learned and gladly believed in by all little ones—that “God loves all his children.”

In learning one of the “Hymns for Little Children,” which are great favourites, a little boy of three, who had been a long time in the hospital, always persisted in rendering a line as follows: “Ye belong to Jesus, children of the ward,” instead of, “Ye belong to Jesus, children of the Lord.” Nothing would induce him to say otherwise, and by degrees Tom’s version was generally adopted.

Isabel got daily stronger at Highgate, and her brother tried hard to get well that he might get a week of his sister’s company there before her month should be over; but to his loudly-expressed disgust, he was not “put down for Highgate” until too late to have anything but a kiss in a great hurry, as she stepped out of and he into the Highgate omnibus. However, they both bore the disappointment very well, Edwin saying, “Never mind, old girl, we can play at home again soon,” and little smiling Isabel responding, “All right!”

About this time an elder sister was taken ill with the same typhoid fever from which they had all suffered, and as she was too old for Great Ormond Street, one of the kind ladies procured an admission for her into another hospital. I need not say their home was a wretched, unhealthy place, and the wonder is that so much gentle refinement and sweetness should have marked the manner of the whole family.

A kind lady intends putting little Isabel to school, where she may be taught all useful things, and by-and-by, we will hope, be a strong happy servant. After such a very dangerous illness, one can but think she is spared to be somewhat more specially a child of God than before her visit to the hospital.

After Isabel, Emily C., whose case was one of slight hysteria, occupied the “Quiver Cot.” She is eleven years old, and has been several times before in the hospital, and is devoted to the place, makes herself very useful to the nurses, and is always most sorry to find herself getting well enough to go home, especially this last time, as there was no chance of her being readmitted, on account of her age.

Just before Christmas a very sad case was admitted in Emily’s place. A poor, wretched little

girl, for whom everything imaginable was done; amongst other things, her nurse was ordered to rub a cupful of cod liver oil daily into her chest, but all efforts were unavailing, and poor little suffering Mary died very early on Christmas morning. All the cots were wreathed on Christmas Eve, and special ones, of larger size, were put upon the endowed cots, with two large white lilies in the evergreen. I put little Mary’s wreath over her head in the evening; she was sleeping quietly enough then, but before the sun rose over the snow little Mary had heard the real angels’ song. Happy little Mary!

The poor mother came in the afternoon, expecting to see her (for the letter written the night before had never been given to her), and found the empty cot. A few kind words of sympathy comforted the poor woman, who could but feel that the best for her child and herself had happened.

I have forgotten many little amusing remarks which I hoped to remember. The children cannot understand what THE QUIVER is, but I think they imagine, as a rule, that he is a very kind man, who has bought a cot and lets them sleep in it.

“THE QUIVER” BIBLE CLASS.

142. With reference to what fact does St. Paul quote Ps. lxi. 9?

143. Two of the minor prophets give God the same character in identically the same words.

144. The term “heaven” is invariably used in a bad sense, such as the “heaven of the Pharisees,” &c., with one exception.

145. Give the name and relate the act recorded of a remarkable Levite who was with the disciples after our Lord’s ascension.

146. Our Lord himself distinguishes between his divine and human sonship. Give the text.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 432.

132. 1 Tim. vi. 13. “Before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.”

133. 2 Cor. iii. 14.

134. In Hannah’s song (1 Sam. ii. 10).

135. Ruth (iv. 2); 1 Kings xxi. 8.

136. “Dan shall judge thee” (Gen. xlix. 16). Samson was the son of Manoah, who was of the tribe of Dan.

137. Judges xi. 40. “The daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.” The marginal reading for “to lament” is “to talk with.”

“THE QUIVER COT” FUND.

We shall be glad to receive any Lists which may still be out, as it is desirable to close the account without further delay. A statement of the Fund will shortly be laid before our readers.—ED. Q.